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Lifestyles
The Chapel Hill Newspaper
Monday, December 16, 1985 Page 5B

Texas Doctors Volunteer For Jungle Duty

By CHERYL B. CHAPMAN
United Press International

CRIQUE SARCO, Belize — Every year volunteer medical teams from Amigos Internacionales travel from the United States to tiny, impoverished Belize where the care available is sporadic and the suffering chronic.

Dr. David Nichols, a dentist from Tyler, Texas, has had his share of frustrations during trips to the multi-racial Central American democracy.

"You're not going down there to cure all the deformities in the country," he said. "You're going to get the pus out of their mouths."

Shipwrecked British seamen founded little Belize by accident in 1638 and the nation's progress from British colony to protectorate to independence has been marked by that same ad-hoc, seat-of-the-pants quality.

Formerly British Honduras, Belize is snuggled against the Caribbean between Guatemala and the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. It never was the most remote nation in Central America, only the most inaccessible, thanks to a treacherous 190-mile offshore reef.

Until air travel, it was so tough getting to Belize that Aldous Huxley was moved to remark in 1934, "If the world had any ends, British Honduras would surely be one of them."

The nation scatters its population of 160,000 over a jungle about the size of New Hampshire, some 8,867 square miles. One-third of the people cluster in Belize City, the nation's largest town and leading seaport, a metropolis with no traffic lights and a sewer system dependent on catfish.

THE PATHWAY that reaches from Texas to Belize is paved by philanthropy.

"In 1962 a group of men in Athens, Texas, formed an interdenominational philanthropic organization — Amigos Internationales," said Dr. Kerfoot Walker, director of the Tyler-Smith County Health Department, which coordinates the expeditions. "They wanted to put their energies and money together to reach out to people in ways other than those practiced by their individual churches.

"In early 1970, we struck an agreement with the government of Belize promising them regular — but intermittent — dental and medical service."

Because medical supplies are hard to come by in Belize, the Amigos take along everything they can cajole from U.S. drug companies.

"Once when I went there the district hospital at Punta Gorda had only eight antibiotic tablets left," Walker said.

As Nichols put it, "Going on one of these medical missions is kind of like going to war."

Amigos sent 12 medics to Belize this year: Dr. George Skipworth, Columbus, Ga.; Nichols; Dr. Tom Cooper, Dr. Jim Holton, Dr. Ernest Brady, Dr. Andrew Quiroz, surgical nurse Loraine Jewett, nurse anesthetist Bill O'Neal, and medical assistants Debbie Morris and Carolyn Jones, all of Tyler; Dr. Mike Kennebrew, New Orleans; and medical assistant Cheryl Chapman, Dallas, who also is a UPI reporter.

The group split, with Skipworth, Brady, Nichols, Morris, Jones and Chapman continuing to the jungle and Holton, Kennebrew, Quiroz, Cooper, O'Neal and Jewett staying at the hospital in Belize City.

The trip by dugout from Punta Gorda to the interior Mayan jungle village of Crique Sarco took five hours, a long time to sit motionless on a narrow wooden boat seat.

"Toledo District sometimes is called the forgotten district," said nurse Dorothy Wingard, a Mennonite health care worker in Crique Sarco. "It's the one furthest from the seat of government, and perhaps the most isolated."

THE MEDICS began work immediately as twilight fell.

Wingard accompanied Skipworth, Brady and Nichols to the thatched hut of the Choc family. Candalaria Choc was having problems in the final week of her ninth pregnancy, but she refused to leave her husband and eight children to get care.

Choc's husband, stricken with malaria, lay passively in his hammock. The dusty room stank of fever and chickens trailed in and out through the door.

"If she doesn't want to go to hospital, nurse, I won't make her," the husband said. "If God wants her, she die. If He doesn't, she won't."

Some stories, like that of Stephanie Johnson, 3, a cripple, had happier endings.

Stephanie, daughter of village schoolteacher Genevieve Flores, had been playing outside their former home in Belize City when a heavy hurricane door propped against the house fell on her leg.

"The doctors there couldn't set it," Flores said. "They just put a cast on it the way it was."

The knee is growing away from the child's body at about a 30 degree angle. Arrangements will be made through Amigos to bring an orthopedic surgeon from the United States to Belize Hospital for the corrective surgery, Skipworth said, "and after that, she'll grow and run and play like any healthy child, like it never happened."

Nichols said most of the Indians' health problems were caused by diet, especially the popular highly sweetened coffee, which he said eventually killed its devotees.

"Because their (the Indians') teeth rot out early on, they want you to pull all those teeth. They don't realize that when they get rid of their teeth, they're cutting about 20 years off their lives, and this loss of teeth is a real factor in their short lifespan," he said. "It's just sugar, sugar, sugar, and once their teeth are gone, all they can eat are tortillas soaked in that old sweet coffee."

Christian Science Monitor
Dr. George Skipworth (R) works on Mayan Indians in Laguna

CLINIC BEGAN shortly after daybreak with the village's most critically ill.

Initially, Skipworth suspected Martin Pop, 10, had Hansen's disease, commonly called leprosy. His parents were convinced the child was under a curse and had been treating him with charms.

Albina Choc, 36, was another suspected victim of Hansen's disease. Juan Isham Jr. came in with malaria; Timothy Bo, 7, had beefworms.

Most patients had parasites.

"If you could whip the enteric (intestinal) diseases, they'd be the healthiest people in the world," Wingard said.

GET IN GEAR — Congressman Bill Nelson (R), D-Fla., chats with Mission 61-C commander Robert Gibson after arriving at Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Sunday. The Space Shuttle Columbia will carry a crew of seven, including Nelson, on a mission scheduled for launch Wednesday. (UPI)

Danny DeVito enjoys making movies with **Michael Douglas**. It's the locations he doesn't like. DeVito is once again **Ralph** the sleaze in "Jewel of the Nile," Douglas's sequel to "Romancing the Stone." The first movie was shot in the jungle and "Jewel of the Nile" was filmed in the Sahara. "God forbid they give him the go-ahead for another film," DeVito told the New York Daily News. "He'll probably put us in the bottom of the Atlantic in tweed suits. You know something? I'd be there in a minute." In addition to "Jewel of the Nile," DeVito has been busy making "Wise Guys" with **Joe Piscopo**, directing the first two episodes of **Mary Tyler Moore's** new series and preparing for the making of "Ruthless People" with **Bette Midler**. He also had a shot with Oscar on "Sesame Street." Only the father of two little girls — or perhaps a guy like Ralph — could get excited about working with a grouch who lives in a garbage can," DeVito said.

Raisa Gorbachev isn't the only stylish woman behind the Iron Curtain, according to **Brigitte Brandt**, wife of former West German Chancellor **Willy Brandt**. In an article she wrote for a German newspaper, Brandt says she found Poland's first lady, **Barbara Jaruzelski**, was the biggest surprise of her visit to Warsaw. "She is very attractive," Brandt said. "Tall, slim with blonde hair and warm, dark brown eyes," Brandt said. Brandt said she and Mrs. Jaruzelski talked about German, particularly playwright **Friedrich von Schiller** and novelist **Heinrich Boell**. She said she had not expected to meet Jaruzelski and therefore took no gift to give her. "Now I am going to get Boell's complete works and send it her. You can't get it in Poland," Brandt said.

Three of the new members of the Songwriters Hall of Fame need no introduction but three others might. **Marvin Hamlisch** and rock 'n' roll pioneers **Chuck Berry** and **Buddy Holly** were chosen along with the lesser known **Jimmy Webb** and **Felice** and **Boudleaux Bryant**.

The Almanac ... For December 16

In 1773, protesting the British tax on tea, some 50 American patriots dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston harbor in "The Boston Tea Party."

In 1835, one of history's worst fires swept over whole city blocks in New York City, razing 600 buildings and causing $20 million damage.

In 1944, Germany launched a great counter-offensive in World War II that became known as "The Battle of the Bulge."

Phobias Not At All Unusual

Ann Landers
Columnist

Dear Ann Landers: I am a teen-ager who appears confident and capable of handling anything that comes my way. Actually I have many fears, some of them quite irrational. But knowing that they make no sense doesn't help them go away — like my fear of being trapped in an elevator.

It helps to know I am not alone. In a magazine called TeenAge, I read a survey on teen-age fears. The question was: "What are you afraid of?" Here are the results. I hope you will print them in your column. — **J.D. In Philadelphia**

Dear J.D.: I will, indeed. Thanks for passing them on.

What Are Your Afraid Of?	Percent
Nuclear War	57
My parents dying	54
Failing school	44
Dying	43
Having a car accident	34
Loneliness	33
Not having a girl/boyfriend	30
Being beaten/injured	29
Disease	28
Rejection	28
Not being accepted by the college of choice	27
Being unpopular	25
Being unemployed	22
Parents getting divorced	19
Other	18
Ghosts	7
Parents/stepparents	6
Thunder/lightning	5

And now, J.D., and others, perhaps you are not aware that fears are natural. We all have fears in varying degrees of intensity. But when a fear becomes so awesome that it prevents us from leading a normal life, it is then a phobia. Overwhelming fears (or phobias) can be overcome with professional help. Anyone who wants more information should write to The Phobia Society of America, 5820 Hubbard Drive, Rockville, MD 20852. (Please enclose a legal-sized, self-addressed, stamped envelope.)

Dear Ann Landers: My son was engaged to a beautiful young woman for two years. They broke up and she found a new sweetheart. I loved her as I would love a daughter. The breakup was very hard on me.

"Betsy" is planning to be married in a few months. I have not been in contact with that dear person since she and my son parted, nearly a year ago. I would love to send her a little wedding gift. Would it be proper? — **Almost But Not Quite In N.J.**

Dear A. But N.Q.: By all means send a modest gift. It will make her happy to know that you still think of her affectionately.

Don't get burned by a "line" that's too hot to handle. Play it cool with Ann Landers' guide to "Necking and Petting — What Are the Limits?" Send your request to Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11995, Chicago, Ill. 60611, enclosing 50 cents and a long, stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Don't Be Imprisoned By Your Fears

Joyce Brothers
Columnist

Dear Dr. Brothers: People have always made fun of me because I have phobias about airplanes and elevators. I feel very stupid about these because I know they're irrational. Both my husband and my boss make me feel even more stupid with their comments. I don't have to travel on my job and I don't have to use elevators, so why can't I and everybody else just forget about my phobic reactions? — **J.D.**

Dear J.D.: It doesn't really matter what other people think about your phobias, but it's important to overcome them because you'll feel freer and better about yourself. Even though you may not live or work in an elevator building, you never know when you might desperately need this convenience. It could even save your life, or someone else's. You don't want to have to live bound in by fears that you know are irrational.

Phobias such as yours are often manifestations of other problems. Often, phobic personalities don't feel free to express emotions. They may have been taught not to make any waves ... to behave and be quiet. Those who are afraid of flying are often afraid of losing control of themselves. This may have an effect upon their sex life as well as their travel.

Phobics tend to be high achievers. California psychiatrist Arthur Hardy points out that you need a good brain to be phobic. Most have IQs between 110 and 160. They're unusually imaginative and well able to visualize what will happen if their fears should come to pass.

You've no reason to feel inferior, but you've also no reason to remain imprisoned by your fears. Get help and lose them.

Dear Dr. Brothers: I'm about to start a new job with new problems and I'm filled with anxiety. This isn't new for me. Whenever I started a new course in college, I had the same jitters. Eventually I calm down, but my nerves get in the way a lot. What can I do to overcome this fear? — **A.V.**

Dear A.V.: First of all recognize the fact that you're human and your fears of new jobs and new situations are shared by almost everyone. You can help yourself if you try thinking positively whenever you're about to leap into something new. If negative thoughts start to creep in, push them aside. They can prevent you from listening and from taking in important information.

Set your goals and decide upon the strategy you're going to use to get them. When problems arise, instead of letting them overpower you, take them one at a time, define them, and the chances are you'll be able to cope with them.

Don't be afraid to talk over problems that are tricky. Find a mentor and ask his or her advice. No matter how much you work, schedule time to relax and play. This socializing will help you to solve problems because it will get everything back in perspective.

Hard To Pinpoint Cause Of Epilepsy

Handicapped Mailbag
By Bette Elliott

Dear Bette: A neighbor of mine is very upset about her child's epilepsy, and no one could possibly blame her. She feels that she was not treated properly when she had her baby and that the birth experience caused her child's health problem. We live in a small, rural community, and do not know very much about handicaps. My neighbor's doctor says the hospital and the birth procedure were not to blame in her case, and that he cannot offer her any advice except to "accept it" and go on from there. She needs information and doesn't know where to turn. — **No name, no town**

Dear No Name: Your neighbor's doctor is right. Childbirth difficulties do not cause epilepsy, and it is almost impossible to point to a cause for this distressing disease. Most parents of children who have cerebral palsy, or who are mentally retarded, or who are epileptic, think the doctor and the hospital must be at fault. Most of the causes behind the first two conditions are not related to labor and delivery. The majority of such cases are caused by genetics, metabolism and viruses.

I have taken the above information from the findings of a panel on epilepsy, which was part of a National Institute of Health Conference, held recently in Washington. The panel was sponsored by the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Strokes and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The doctors who took part agreed that scientists must better understand brain development in unborn children, need vaccines to prevent viruses that attack the brain and need better methods of identifying mothers who have a child with a brain disorder.

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